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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT FAIR
CLOSING CEREMONY
BEGUM ROKEYA UNIVERSITY, RANGPUR
APRIL 10, 2014**

The Honorable Mashiur Rahman-Ranga, State Minister of Rural Development and Cooperatives

The Honorable Tipu Munshi, MP

Dr. AKM Nurun Nabi, Vice-Chancellor, Begum Rokeya University

Friend and Colleague USAID Mission Director Janina Jarulzelski

... and most especially Mrs. Malick.

Asalamu alaikum, nameskar and good afternoon

Mrs. Malick?

Mrs. Malick? Who is this Mrs. Malick?

Last week I gave a speech in a fancy Dhaka hotel to 40 women entrepreneurs from all the countries of South Asia and Bangladesh ... as I looked out upon them, I saw so many Mrs. Malicks.

And today, as I look out upon the women in this audience I see so many more Mrs. Malicks.

I first met Mrs. Malick a couple of years ago in Jessore District.

Mrs. Malick was a woman who wanted to be more ... a woman who wanted to do more ... a woman who wanted to build a better life for her family and for herself.

I think many of you believe much like Mrs. Malick.

Mrs. Malick of Jessore was an entrepreneur ...

... she took out a loan and bought a machine to make fertilizer briquettes ... guti fertilizer ...

... Mrs. Malick became a successful businesswoman ...

... she paid off her loan ...

... she became a pillar of her community ...

... a woman of confidence, a woman who commands respect, a woman treasured and valued by the men and women of her village ...

... a woman treasured and valued by the men and women of her village ...

... a pillar of her community ...

... Mrs. Malick.

Mrs. Malick is here today ...

... I see so many Mrs. Malick's ...

... you ...

... I speak of you, women who are determined in your own way to forge a new life, a better life for your family, your community, yourself.

Life of a woman ... whether in America, in Africa, in South Asia, in Bangladesh or here in Rangpur ... life of a woman is hard.

As I have seen so many times in America, there is deeply ingrained discrimination against women, that women somehow are second class.

As I have seen so many times in America, there are unwritten rules about what women can and cannot do, rules that limit opportunity of self-expression and personal growth.

As I have seen so many times in America, violence ... physical and psychological violence is often targeted against women.

In America ... and perhaps here in Rangpur, too, these are serious hurdles and obstacles.

But in America and I believe here, too, as demonstrated by the attendance at this wonderful Gender and Development Fair, men and women alike are declaring "enough ... this must change."

In America, around the world and, perhaps, here in Rangpur, too, men and women together are coming to believe what my boss U.S. Secretary of State Kerry firmly believes: “No nation can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind.”

I believe that is what this fair is all about ... men and women exploring how best they can work together to build better lives for their children, their families, their communities and for themselves.

I believe that all of us, whether American, Bangladeshi or from some other place essentially want the same thing. We want to have the means to provide our families ...

... a safe, secure house.

... ample and nutritious food.

... good healthcare.

... the best education for our kids.

I believe that is the essence of life.

Drawing from my experience in America and in many other countries around the world, I believe that these goals are more achievable when women are empowered to make their fullest contribution to building their families, their communities, indeed, to building themselves.

My experience shows that when men and women work together as partners ... partners respectful of each other ... partners committed to tapping each other's skills and talents ... I believe then prospects are best for forging the quality of life that I believe we all seek for our families and ourselves.

I am proud that America and the faculty and staff of Begum Rokeya University are hosting this Gender and Development Fair so Bangladeshis can explore how best to empower women ... to unleash their talents, their energy, their creativity, their entrepreneurial drive ... so they can play their critical part in building the Bangladesh of Tagore's vision ...

... of building Sonar Bangla.

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**As prepared for delivery*